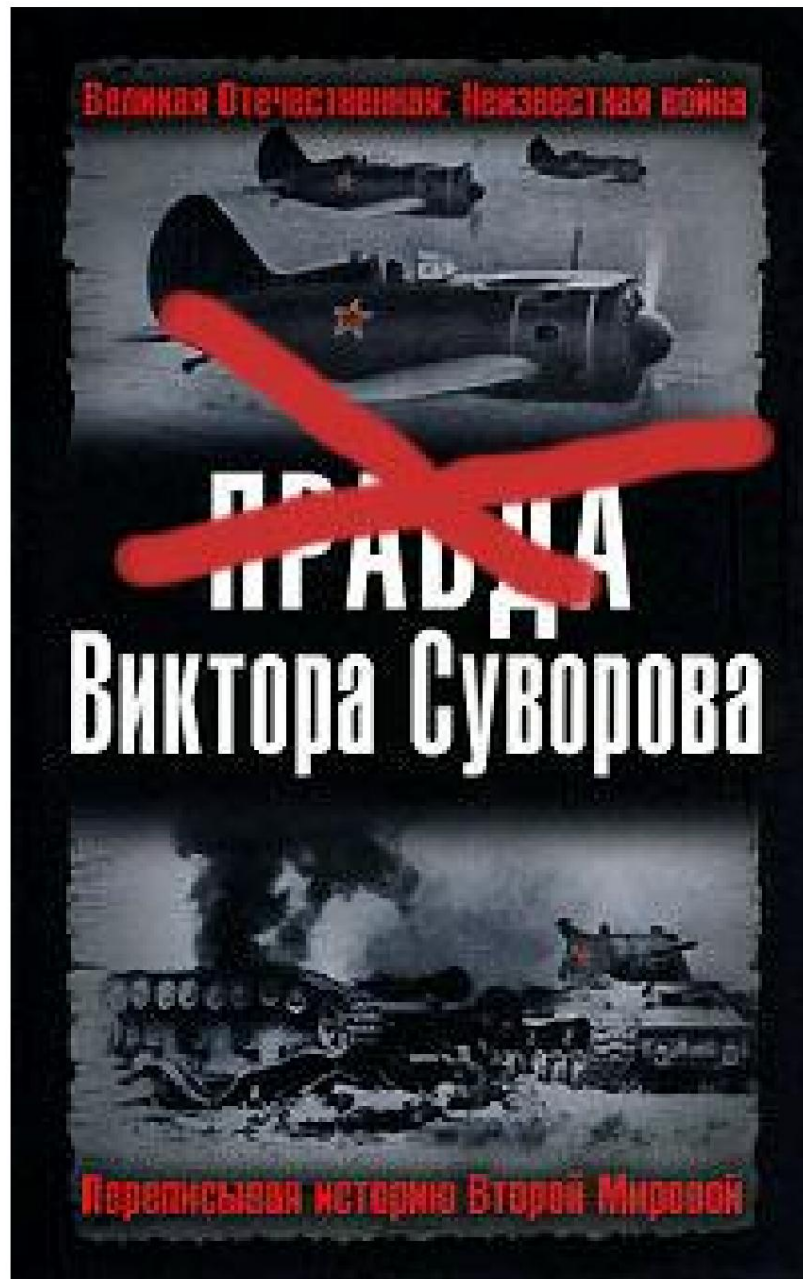


Mikhail Meltyukhov



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Since the late 1980s, the military-political events on the eve of the Great Patriotic War have become the object of a lively discussion in Russian historiography, during which a large number of new, until recently secret documents were introduced into scientific circulation, and many studies appeared that more objectively illuminate this period of national history. The discussion that unfolded led to the identification of new archival documents on the problems of the participation of the Soviet Union in the events of the eve and the beginning of World War II, indicating that the Soviet leadership, of course, had its own view of the political situation of that period and tried to use it to its advantage. The materials and studies that have appeared have shown that the traditional official version of the exclusively defensive intentions of the Soviet leadership is becoming less and less substantiated and needs to be substantially modernized.

Since 1993 military-political problems on the eve of the Great Patriotic War 1. Although were at the center of the discussion caused by the publication in Russia of the books of V. Suvorov, these works are written in the genre of historical journalism and represent a kind of "layer cake", when the truth is mixed with half-truth and lies, they quite clearly outlined the circle of the least developed problems in historiography. At the same time, it should be noted that these publications organically fit into the increasingly aggravated controversy regarding the recent Soviet past and were received "with a bang" by all "fighters against Soviet totalitarianism." Moreover, the main theses that V. Suvorov tried to "prove" are the statements that the Soviet Union was solely to blame for the outbreak of the Second World War, and the German attack on the USSR was a "preventive war". As is customary in journalism, the author often uses omissions or unsubstantiated statements, which in fact do not at all confirm his vociferous statements.

Speaking about the foreign policy goals of the Soviet Union, V. Suvorov paints a rather simplified picture of the fact that the Soviet leadership was asleep and saw how to attack someone. At the same time, he refers to various propaganda statements of a revolutionary nature, which were actually published in the Soviet press. Of course, such slogans reflect the state of public consciousness of that time, including the Soviet ruling elite. But at the same time, it should be remembered that in politics (including international politics) it is not intentions that matter, but opportunities. However, in the interwar period, the possibilities of the Soviet Union to expand its influence on the world stage were rather modest and were limited mainly to diplomatic, propaganda and economic measures. In addition, V. Suvorov is completely silent about the moods of the elites of other great powers. As a result, the then political landscape is completely distorted. It turns out that some "bloody maniacs" were in power in the USSR, and "white and fluffy" politicians in the West. But if you do not turn a blind eye to the huge number of documents and materials now available in different languages, a quite reasonable question arises as to why exactly these "good guys" fought among themselves, marking the beginning of the Second World War. It is clear that in the books of V. Suvorov we will not find even a hint of an attempt to answer this question.

And the position of the author in this case is quite understandable. After all, then one would have to admit that international politics, like any politics, is a struggle for power. Therefore, any state forms its interests on the world stage in accordance with their geopolitical parameters, resource opportunities, level of economic development, weight and place in the world community and national and cultural traditions. In the most general form, the national-state interests of any country represent a triune set of fundamental goals:

- 1). Self-preservation of the state;**
- 2). Creating the most secure external environment and**
- 3). Accumulation of power (economic, political, military, etc.).**

The state ensures its interests with all available and at its disposal means: political, ideological, economic, diplomatic and military. The external design of national-state interests is largely determined by the value norms and ideology that prevail in each particular era. In the formulation of national-state interests and the formation of a foreign policy strategy designed to implement them, the system of value orientations, attitudes, principles and beliefs of statesmen is of great importance - their perception of the world around them and their assessment of the place of their country among other states that make up the world community.

In principle, it has long been known that the foreign policy of a state depends, first of all, on what place this state occupies in the world hierarchy. A great power has one policy, a regional one has another, and a small country has a third. In addition, one should take into account the goals that a particular country is trying to achieve. For example, a state may strive to maintain its position in the world, or it may try to increase its status on the world stage. In the first case, as a rule, defensive methods prevail, and in the second, offensive ones. However, there is a difference in this matter as well. Since countries of equal status also compete with each other, a great power cannot simply take a defensive position, for this will be a signal to other great powers that the enemy is weak and you can increase pressure on him. Therefore, to be safe, a great power must always demonstrate its strength to both friends and rivals. There is also a certain hierarchy among the great powers themselves. So, in the 1920s and 1930s, England and France were superpowers (although such a term was not used then - they were simply considered the leading countries of the world). It was this status of these countries that was enshrined in the framework of the Versailles-Washington system of international relations. In 1940-1950, the USA and the USSR became superpowers, which was reflected in the Yalta-Potsdam system of international relations.

At all times, international politics has been a fierce struggle for control over the available resources, which were taken from a weak neighbor in various ways. The 20th century was no exception, in the first half of which there were two regular battles between the great powers for a new redistribution of the world and its resources - the First and Second World Wars. Although interstate rivalry is a system-forming factor in international relations, great powers should not be perceived only as "imperialist predators", since they also perform a number of important functions - establish and maintain world order, concentrate resources for a radical improvement of the environment and technological breakthroughs. As a rule, the sphere of influence of a great power is defined as an area of relatively calm and stable development. That is, the great powers perform the function of a leader, stimulating the development of both the region it controls and the world as a whole.

Abstracting from these, quite obvious to any thinking person,

factors, V. Suvorov also "forgets" about the economic problems of the interwar period. By the beginning of the 20th century, a global world economy had formed, consisting of the industrial countries of the West and their agricultural and raw materials appendages in the form of colonies and underdeveloped countries. The condition for the formation of the world economy was the world market, the formation of which took place especially intensively from the middle of the 19th century, when the development of mass machine production led to the development of the world market into the world economy.

Along with the exchange of goods, international production ties have been greatly developed, stimulated by the international migration of capital. The established world economy with the established international division of labor was undermined during the First World War, which led to the reshaping of the world economy. The main role in it passed from England to the United States, the restoration of most of Central and Eastern Europe required huge investments, most of which went to Germany, since only she had a sufficiently developed industrial and financial infrastructure and could recoup the investment. The small states of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe could only offer agricultural products and raw materials to the world market.

The development of the world economy in 1918-1939 . reflected the struggle between two main trends. One of them is from the 19th century . the tradition of the liberal economic regime, the second - the state-regulated economy that developed during the First World War. With the end of the war, this seemingly accidental economic policy was abandoned. Among the great powers, the desire to revive the economic regime of the pre-war period prevailed, and in the 1920s . it seemed to mostly succeed. Only the crisis of 1929-1933 . completely dispelled those hopes. In order to overcome the crisis, all the great powers, to a greater or lesser extent, used state intervention in the economy. Thus, a trend has finally taken shape aimed at creating a systematically developing modern system of a regulated market economy based on advanced technology and rationalization of production, on strengthening the regulatory role of the state.

The development of the world economy in the interwar years is clearly divided into two large stages: the 1920s and 1930s , which are separated by the global crisis of 1929-1933 . In the 1920s in general, there was a fairly stable system of the world economy, which contributed to the preservation of the post-war economic status quo. Anglo-American economic rivalry, during which the United States increasingly attacked the economic positions of England, permeates the entire 1920s . Following the intensive American financial expansion, other great powers in the second half of the 1920s . expanded the export of capital, which led to an increase in private long-term investment from 41.6 billion dollars in 1913-1914 . up to 47.5 billion dollars in 1929-1930 . Accordingly, the volume of world GORGOVLI, which decreased from 64.8 billion dollars in 1913 to 151.8 billion dollars in 1920 , increased to 83.9 billion dollars in 1929 .

World crisis 1929 -1933 dealt a heavy blow to the global economy and changed

economic situation. World industrial production decreased by 37%, the capacity of the world market decreased. The financial crisis led to a sharp decline in capital exports, which fell from \$ 2.8 billion in 1928 to \$ 344 million in 1932 and to \$ 311 million in 1936. In index terms, capital exports fell from \$ 100 million to 1925-1928 _ to 12 in 1932 and 10 in 1934. Correspondingly , the total amount of private long-term investments decreased from 47.5 billion dollars in 1929-1930 . to 31.1 billion dollars in 1938

The credit sphere turned out to be destroyed: during the crisis, 25 countries stopped making payments totaling \$ 6.3 billion . The global currency crisis led to the collapse of the "gold standard" system and the folding of currency blocs, which was an attempt to protect against the devaluation of currencies. The desire of the leading countries to protect their economies with high customs barriers, in combination with the above problems, led to the growth of autarkic tendencies and the formation of trade blocs, which stimulated the atomization of the world market and strengthened bilateral trade to the detriment of multilateral ones.

The desire of the great powers to overcome the crisis and its consequences on the ways of expanding exports intensified the growth of competition, state support for exporters and protectionism. As a result, the relatively unified world economy of the 1920s found itself in a crisis and began to disintegrate into a number of local economic systems, which led to the undermining of world stability and a sharp increase in competition between the great powers

In the 1930s a clear process of redistributing the economic roles of the great powers in the world economy and changing the economic picture of the world began. The United States and Britain continued to compete for first place in the economic hierarchy of the great powers. Germany became the third world power, the importance of France declined, and Italy generally retained its position. The USSR and Japan became the new industrial powers. Anglo-American economic rivalry had become so commonplace during the 1920s that the economic rise of Germany was not at first perceived as a serious threat by the parties. It is no coincidence that both Britain and the United States contributed to the development of the German economy, hoping to use it to put pressure on the rival. Using the Anglo-American contradictions, Germany was able not only to significantly strengthen its economy, but also to pursue an independent policy. As a result, a system of tripartite economic rivalry between England, the USA and Germany was formed, which allowed all its participants to play on the contradictions of their rivals.

True, the position of the three economically leading great powers was different. Thus, the US economy, with all the complexities of a protracted depression, still had significant potential reserves and was interested in consolidating the world economy, where it could play a key role. The economy of England was able to overcome the consequences of the crisis by strengthening the economic isolation of the British Empire, but had limited resources to maintain its economic position within the framework of an open world economy. Germany, which managed to mobilize its economy and become the world's third economic power thanks to strict state control, did not have significant resources for a long-term economic struggle at all. Therefore, the economic expansion of Germany was accompanied by the use of a hidden, and later open , military-political threat.

England sought not only to use German-American competition in its own interests, but also to achieve a comprehensive settlement of relations with Berlin, creating a kind of European political and economic bloc directed against the USA and the USSR. In the mid 1930s . The US also realized the need for some kind of agreement with Germany. At the end of 1936, Washington proposed the creation of a European consortium to exploit the Congo Basin and provide funds to stabilize the German economy, which in response was to stop the policy of armament and autarky. As a result of the implementation of this plan, international trade would receive a significant impetus, the United States would be able to increase its economic expansion in Europe and Africa. Naturally, Britain contributed in every possible way to the disruption of this plan, and from the beginning of 1937 intensified its policy of appeasing Germany, hoping to reach its own economic agreement with it. In January 1937, the United States proposed holding a conference to develop measures to ensure equal access to raw materials in the spirit of an "open door" policy, which, of course, caused a negative reaction from England, which was the owner of a significant part of these resources. In response, the United States and Germany held talks in San Francisco in November 1937 on the division of world markets, but in the face of an economic downturn in the United States and more than generous British proposals regarding the revision of borders in Europe, Germany evaded any specific agreements⁴ .

In an effort to use Germany against the United States, England had no intention of clearly worsening its relations with Washington, realizing the need to counterbalance Berlin, which by all means was delaying the conclusion of an agreement with London. Continuing to seek an agreement with Germany, on November 17 , 1938 , England concluded a trade agreement with the United States, granting them the most favored nation treatment, which opened the door to the British Empire for the American economy. However, contacts with Germany were not interrupted, and on March 15-16, 1939 , an Anglo-German cartel agreement was concluded in Dusseldorf , which made it possible to change the cartel structure of the world in favor of the Anglo-German monopolies, and the US refusal to join it could cause joint British response. and Germany. On March 11 , 1939 , France also offered Germany an extensive economic agreement. All this could not but cause violent discontent in the United States, which, in the face of the threat of the economic consolidation of Europe, took with relief the beginning of the pre-war political crisis, which meant the undermining of this dangerous trend for them, which contributed to the preservation of the division of Europe and the outbreak of war.

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Other great powers did not have the opportunity to enter into the global economic struggle, but often became competitors of the leading economic powers at the regional level. Japan quite successfully played this role in the Far East, Italy in the Balkans and East Africa, France in Europe and its own colonies. Only the USSR did not participate in this economic struggle, although it used its foreign trade relations to strengthen its influence. The collapse of the world economy into local economic systems not only exacerbated the mutual competition of the great powers, but also contributed to the intensification of the arms race, which was seen as a means of stimulating

economic recovery. In 1938 , the military spending of Germany, Italy and Japan amounted to 1905 million pounds sterling,⁶ England, France and the USA - 829 million pounds, the USSR - 924 million pounds . It is clear that the militarization of economies sterling Germany and the USSR and the development of the Japanese economy in a military environment had a decisive influence to their structure. Lacking opportunities for economic confrontation on the world stage, these countries deliberately created a military-industrial complex in preparation for war, which reflected their economic weakness, forcing them to prioritize preparation for activities during a wartime period, when war itself is seen as a necessary condition for changing their place in the world.

By 1939 , Germany managed to become the leading economic power in Central and Eastern Europe, and the growth of its military power made it possible to transform economic influence into political. It is no coincidence that, according to F. Roosevelt, "one of the main reasons for the emergence of the war was Germany's desire to seize a dominant position in the trade of Central Europe" rivalry in the ⁷ . economic England - USA - Germany triangle was superimposed on the political confrontation of the great powers in the international arena, which led to mutual stimulation both economic and political conflicts.

The Versailles-Washington system was a certain form of political organization of international relations after the war of 1914-1918 . and was enshrined in treaties and agreements of 1919-1922 . As usual, the basis of the system of international relations, the most important internal factor in its development, was the balance of power, understood as a specific historical ratio of the relative weight and influence of the states included in the system, and first of all the great powers, which, in fact, were the main system-forming elements. Of course, medium and small states also influenced the overall balance of power in the system of international relations, but mainly at the regional level. The existence of any system, including the Versailles-Washington system, continues as long as the correlation (balance) of forces between individual countries enshrined in it corresponds to the realities of the process of historical development of states. A certain stability inherent in the system of international relations depends on the degree of its equilibrium, which is a special case of the cabbage soup balance, in which it corresponds at least to the balance of the main interests of the great powers

8 .

However, due to the internal development of great powers, "the interests of one or more countries begin to go beyond the existing balance of power, as a result of which the stability of the system is violated. If it is not possible to modify the system and reach a new consensus, the system collapses. The transition from one system to another , as a rule, is accompanied by wars. The mutual relations of states within the system of international relations are determined primarily by their attitude to the existing balance. Some seek to consolidate it, others to transformation, and others to destruction. Depending on this, states build their relations with each other. other as allies, partners or adversaries. Countries seeking to maintain the equilibrium of the system are called balancer states.

guarantors of the preservation of the system of international relations, its adaptation to new 9 historical realities”

The formation of a new world order in Europe after the First World War was complicated by the revolution in Russia and the chaos in Eastern Europe. The development of the Versailles Treaty was carried out only by the winners, who often pursued various goals. For France, the main thing was the maximum weakening of Germany, which made it possible to consolidate French hegemony in Europe and secure its eastern borders. England and the USA were more interested in maintaining the European balance. For this, it was necessary to take into account the interests of Germany to a greater extent, which, in the conditions of the collapse of Austria-Hungary, the revolution in Russia, the general national revolutionary upsurge and effective Bolshevik propaganda, could be used as a stabilizing factor in Central and Eastern Europe. As a result, the Versailles agreements were a compromise between these extreme positions at the expense of the vanquished, which predetermined the revolutionary upsurge in Hungary, the formation of mass communist parties and the revanchist vector of German foreign policy. England and France tried to use the new states that had arisen in Europe both against the Bolshevik revolution and against German revanchism. However, the role of the allies of London and Paris has never been too high and tended to decline.

The coordinated position of England, France and the USA could become a guarantee of the strength of the Versailles system . However, for a number of reasons the United States withdrew itself from the political problems of Europe, while England and France saw the prospect of European equilibrium differently. Germany, which became the object of the Treaty of Versailles, and the Soviet Socialist Republic, which was generally outside the framework of the new system of international relations, quite naturally became its opponents. Thus, the Versailles system remained unbalanced and non-universal, and its relatively high degree of conflict, despite the maintaining the division of the political map of Europe into winners and losers.

The settlement of international relations in the Asia-Pacific region took place in a more relaxed atmosphere. During the conference in Washington (November 12, 1921- February 6, 1922) , a new alignment of forces in the Far East was established, which was based on the partnership of the great powers based on a consensus on naval problems, mutual guarantees of regional interests and common policy principles in China. The equilibrium of the system was strengthened by the new role of Japan, which, although it was forced to abandon its alliance with England and limit its claims in China and Russia, received guarantees of naval security. Thus, Japan found itself in the role of the main guarantor of the Washington system of international relations. However, only the Far Eastern powers in cooperation with the United States and Britain could be guarantors against Japanese expansionism, but they (the USSR and China) were either excluded from the system of international relations or were its object. Therefore, being a more balanced system than Versailles, it remained non-universal, since it excluded the USSR and China from its subjects.

Within the framework of the Versailles-Washington system of international relations, all the great powers pursued their own goals, ranging from a complete change in the world order to its significant transformation.

The main goal of England was to preserve the role of the political center of the world and the supreme arbiter in European affairs, which required, first of all, the restoration of the "balance of power" in Europe. A European balance under indirect British control would have enabled Britain to more actively resist the two main threats to its position in the world that came from the USSR and the USA. The creation of a "balance of power" in Europe required England to weaken the dominant influence of France by strengthening the position of Germany, which led to concessions to Berlin. England was also pushed towards the consolidation of Europe by centrifugal tendencies, more and more clearly felt in the British Empire. The preservation of England's position in the world in the face of a change in the balance of power of the great powers required control over the process of modernization of the Versailles-Washington system. The reflection of this policy was "appeasement", which boiled down to a revision of the existing world order under the control of England. By the end of the 1930s, the threat from Germany was added to the two already traditional threats to British interests from the USSR and the USA, which put England before the problem of choosing the future partner and prices of convergence him.

The main goal of France was to preserve the won positions on the basis of the creation of a pan-European security system, which met with resistance from the other great powers. France's concessions on the issue of reparations and Germany's equal rights in armaments (1932) and the signing of the Pact of the Four (1933) led to a weakening of its influence in Europe. Negotiations on the Eastern Pact with the aim of creating a pan-European security system ran into the unwillingness of other great powers and a number of French allies to cooperate with the USSR. Under these conditions, the mutual assistance pact with the Soviet Union became for the French leadership a means of putting pressure on Britain and Germany. Crisis of 1935-1938 further weakened the position of France in Europe and tied her foreign policy to the position of England, which was seen as a natural ally against Germany.

During the 1920s Italy continued the foreign policy tradition of an alliance with England to strengthen its influence in the Balkans. But the real strengthening of Italy's positions in the Eastern Mediterranean led from 1928 to a cooling of Italian-British relations. In the 1930s the strengthening of Germany increased the interest of England and France in cooperation with Italy, which allowed the latter to obtain a number of concessions from them in Africa. During the crisis of 1935-1938. Italy began rapprochement with Germany, basing its foreign policy on balancing between Germany, England and France in order to expand its influence in the Mediterranean, which was quite compatible with the transformation of the existing system of international relations.

The main foreign policy goal of Japan was to expand the zone of influence on

Far East. In the conditions of the civil war in China, the active Soviet penetration into Xinjiang, Mongolia and Northern Manchuria, the Soviet-Chinese conflict and the Anglo-American rivalry, Japan relied on military Far Eastern problems. The use of resolving inter-imperialist political colonial contradictions in the region, anti-Bolshevik and anti-propaganda, and gaining allies in Europe allowed Japan to pursue an expansionist course and maintain acceptable relations with other participants in the struggle for influence in the region. In general, the Japanese desire to increase its influence was limited to the Far East and was quite compatible with the transformation of the existing system of international relations.

For Germany, the main foreign policy goal was the revision of the Treaty of Versailles, and in the future, a global change in the existing system of international relations. Using the contradictions between the other great powers, by the end of 1932 Germany managed to eliminate the most severe consequences of the defeat in the First World War. The new German leadership successfully continued this political line, adopting the "policy of a fait accompli." Crisis of 1935-1938 strengthened the position of Germany, which found allies and new opportunities for pressure on England and France. Using the policy of "appeasement", its achievements in the economy, military construction, the ideas of anti-Bolshevism, pacifism and nationalism, Germany was able from the beginning of 1938 to proceed to the revision of the territorial provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. As a result, by the end of the 1930s. Germany has significantly increased its military-economic potential and influence in the international arena.

During the years of the revolution and the Civil War, the Soviet Union lost the positions won by the Russian Empire in the international arena and territories in Eastern Europe. In terms of its influence in Europe, the country was thrown back 200 years into the past. It is no coincidence that the Soviet leadership adopted the concept of a world revolution, which combined a new ideology and the traditional tasks of foreign policy to strengthen the country's influence in the world. The strategic goal of the country's foreign policy was the global reorganization of the system of international relations, which made England, France and their allies the main opponents. Having staked on the inevitability of the emergence of a new inter-imperialist conflict, the USSR sought to prevent the consolidation of the great powers, rightly perceiving this as the main threat to its interests. The Soviet leadership skillfully used official diplomatic channels, the illegal possibilities of the Comintern, social propaganda, pacifist ideas, anti-fascism, assistance to some victims of the aggressors to create the image of the main fighter for peace and social progress.

The basis of the foreign policy of the United States was the desire to take the position of the political center of the world instead of England, which required a complete reorganization of the system of international relations based on the creation of a global balance of power of the great powers under the auspices of Washington. Having adopted the policy of "isolationism", the United States made economic expansion the basis of its foreign policy, and economic rivalry with England led the United States to support Germany and Japan, the economic strengthening of which was supposed to complicate the position of London and push it to make concessions to Washington. In the 1930s

gg. in the presence of complex internal problems, the United States successfully used the traditions of the English policy of "brilliant isolation" of the 19th century, which allowed them to maintain a free hand, waiting for events to develop.

Accordingly, in relation to the countries of Latin America since the late 1920s . the policy of "good neighbor" begins to be pursued , in the Far East - the policy of "non-recognition", and in Europe - the policy of "neutrality". The greatest danger to the United States was the British policy of "appeasement", the implementation of which would lead to the preservation of the foundations of the existing system of international relations. Whereas the disruption of this policy and the escalation of the crisis favored

Speaking about the development of the Versailles-Washington system in the interwar twenty years, one should note the presence of global contradictions that had a primary impact on the policy of the great powers. The formation of the post-war system of international relations took place without taking into account the interests of Germany and the USSR, which made them its opponents, and a political triangle developed in Europe (England and France - Germany - the USSR), the participants of which sought to achieve their foreign policy goals, playing on the contradictions of rivals. Fearing a Soviet-German rapprochement, England and France in the mid-1920s . made concessions to Germany, which led to some smoothing of contradictions and Europe. However, the problem of the Soviet Union, which sought to regain the role of a great power, remained unresolved, and in the 1920s . The main world contradiction was the contradiction external to the system of international relations between the USSR and the world order, which basically suited all the other great powers.

In 1930s . the change in the balance of power of the great powers led to the fact that some of them made a frank machine for the violent transformation of the Versailles-Washington system, the principles of which ceased to suit their interests. The peripheral position of these countries in the system of international relations allowed them to use the main contradiction to improve their positions. To this should be added the general growth of regionalism, the desire of all the great powers to use the difficulties of rivals to improve their own positions. This marked an internal crisis in the system of international relations, which could not be eliminated without achieving a new balance of forces and interests. However, there were no sufficiently convincing incentives to achieve it. The crisis of the world economy coincided with the crisis of the Versailles-Washington system, and all the great powers, to one degree or another, embarked on the path of an arms race, preparing for a new struggle for the redivision of the world. It's just that some relied on brute force, while others relied on using the situation to their advantage. Thus, in the 1930s . external contradiction (USSR - Versailles-Washington system) was supplemented by internal system, resulting in a crisis and the collapse of the system of international relations.

As a result, the political organization of the world after the First World War was too vulnerable due to the inherent flaws of the Versailles-Washington system. The collapse of the interwar system of international relations went through several stages in the 1930s . Crisis of 1931-1933 marked the beginning of a violent transformation of the system of international relations, and during the crisis of 1935-1938 . marked its collapse.

The first internal crisis of the Versailles-Washington system was in the conditions Far Eastern events of 1931-1933.

crisis revived Japanese expansionism. The Great Powers were busy fighting the crisis and from this point of view were not a threat to Japan. China and the USSR after the military conflict of 1929 did not achieve an improvement in relations. Nanjing was engaged in a war with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in southern China, while the USSR was economically and politically developing Xinjiang.

All this ruled out the consolidation of Moscow and Nanjing against Japan. Taking advantage of the favorable international situation, on September 18, 1931, the troops of the Kwantung Army invaded Manchuria. The ruler of Manchuria, Zhang Xueliang, who did not receive help from Nanjing, in an effort to save his troops, withdrew them without getting involved in serious battles with the Japanese.

China's appeal to the League of Nations, which took up the study of the issue, demonstrated the disinterest of England and France in solving this problem. The US advised Nanjing not to be distracted from the war with the CCP. The Chinese leadership itself was interested in weakening Zhang Xueliang's army, as this strengthened the influence of Nanjing. Japan promoted the idea of restoring order in Manchuria and purging it of communist elements. Under the conditions of the proclamation of the Chinese Communist Party on November 7, 1931, the Soviet Republic of China, this propaganda met with full understanding in the West. This did not prevent the Japanese leadership from showing loyalty to the USSR and Soviet citizens on the CER. The USSR, for its part, did not show a desire to intervene, although it condemned the aggression in the press. In November - December 1931, when Japanese troops began to advance into Northern Manchuria, which was considered a Soviet sphere of influence, relations between Moscow and Tokyo worsened somewhat, which gave rise to hopes in the Western world that a war would break out between them. But the Soviet leadership decided to come to an agreement and on December 31, 1931, offered Tokyo to conclude an agreement on neutrality on the basis of maintaining "freedom of hands" in China.

On January 7, 1932, the American leadership published its "doctrine of non-recognition" of changes in the Far East, while England did not officially react to these events at all. Japan's attack on Shanghai on January 23, 1932 aggravated its relations with Britain, France and the United States, which, even after undertaking a military demonstration, acted inconsistently. The USSR tried to take advantage of the situation and signed an agreement with Japan on the trade in gasoline with Manchuria and allowed her to use the Chinese Eastern Railway for military transportation. However, the situation around Shanghai was settled, and the Soviet-Japanese contradictions in Manchuria, where on March 1, 1932 the creation of the new state of Manchukuo was proclaimed, revived again. The USSR tacitly supported the anti-Japanese uprisings and the actions of the CPC partisan detachments.

In the autumn of 1932, the USSR tried to negotiate with Japan on the basis of mutual recognition of the status quo and a non-aggression pact, but Tokyo rejected these proposals, because it was interested in maintaining uncertainty and a controlled confrontation with the USSR, which made it possible to propagate the anti-communist struggle and receive the support of Western powers. The USSR, which did not have diplomatic relations with the USA and China and only on October 3, 1929 restored diplomatic relations with England, was isolated in the Asia-Pacific region, and Japan could not be afraid of alternative Soviet blocs. Under these conditions, China and the USSR restored diplomatic relations on December 12, 1932, and the next day Japan officially renounced the non-aggression pact proposed by the USSR.

On February 24, 1933, the League of Nations finally considered the Manchurian question and,

stating the violation by Japan of the 9-power treaty, spoke out for the non-recognition of Manchukuo. As a result, Japan withdrew from the League of Nations on March 27 .

The consensus of the Pacific and Far Eastern powers collapsed, marking a crisis in the system of international relations. The lack of support from the great powers forced China to make concessions to Japan, which led to the truce in Tangu on May 31 , 1933 , which was perceived in the world as the end of the crisis.

Freed from the threat of an expansion of the conflict, Japan stepped up pressure on USSR on the issue of the CER, and in 1933 it was sold to Manchukuo.

This led to a narrowing of Soviet influence in Manchuria, but allowed Moscow avoid war in the Far East.

Meanwhile, in Europe in the second half of the 1920s . Germany succeeded in eliminating a number of control provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. In 1929 , a new system was developed for paying reparations in foreign currency, with a simultaneous reduction in annual contributions and the end of payments in 1988 (Young Plan), the adoption of which by Germany led to the withdrawal of the occupying troops from the Rhineland in June 1930 .

Under the conditions of the world currency crisis, since July 1931 , a moratorium on mutual settlements was introduced, and the payment of reparations was stopped. During the Lausanne Conference (June 16 - July 9, 1932), German reparations were reduced to 3 billion marks, which were to be paid within 15 years. At the disarmament conference on December 11, 1932 , England, France, Italy and the USA recognized Germany's equal rights in the development of the armed forces.

Such concessions to Germany aroused considerable anxiety in the French leadership, which began to look for opportunities for rapprochement with the USSR.

The conclusion of non-aggression treaties between the USSR and Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Poland in 1932 secured its northwestern borders from a possible anti-Soviet union of these countries and made it possible to conclude a Soviet-French non-aggression pact on November 29 , 1932 .

Using put forward by France in the late 1920s . the idea of a pan-European union, England and Italy proposed a draft treaty of the great powers of Europe, which was signed on July 15 , 1933 , but never entered into force.

Having failed to meet its demands for rearmament, Germany left the disarmament conference and on October 14 , 1933 , withdrew from the League of Nations. This prompted France to continue rapprochement with the USSR and led to the start of negotiations on the Eastern Pact.

As a result of the events of the early 1930s . in the Far East and in Europe, the system of international relations gave the first cracks. Japan, using the disunity of the USSR and the West and the rivalry of the great powers in the Far East, began a violent revision of the Versailles-Washington system. However, faced with the choice of the direction of further expansion, she decided not to bring things to a war with the USSR and pursue a cautious policy in China, trying to expand her zone of influence by peaceful means and create a military-economic base in Manchuria for the future.

Germany was able, with the consent of the other great powers, to revise the reparations

the establishment and military restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles and secured a wider room for maneuver between the great powers. England continued the policy of consolidating Europe, which led to new concessions to Germany. The United States tried to use the situation to complicate the position of England and agreed to diplomatic recognition of the USSR, hoping to use it as a counterbalance to Japan. Fearing for its security, France advocated the creation of a European system of collective security with the involvement of the USSR.

The Soviet Union, on the Far Eastern borders of which a hotbed of military tension arose, began to establish contacts with its Western neighbors, France and the United States, declaring support for the policy of collective security in order to ensure a solid rear in Europe. Italy sought to increase its influence in Central Europe (Austria, Hungary) and the Eastern Mediterranean.

The second internal crisis of the Versailles-Washington system, which marked its crash, broke out in 1935-1938 in Europe and the Far East.

Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations led, on the initiative of England, to lively negotiations on the conditions for her return to this organization. The British leadership tried to find a compromise between the demands of Germany and the interests of France, which, in the face of a growing threat to its security, continued to seek the conclusion of the Eastern Pact. This agreement, which originated in the conditions of German-Polish rapprochement, the deterioration of Soviet-German relations and the development of Franco-Soviet contacts, for various reasons did not suit England, Germany, Italy and Poland, which made its conclusion impossible and stimulated the development of a Soviet-French mutual assistance treaty. The result of the negotiations on the Eastern Pact was the entry of the USSR on the initiative of France into the League of Nations in September 1934. At the same time, in the face of the threat to the independence of Austria in the summer of 1934, the Franco-Italian rapprochement began, ending on January 7, 1935 with an agreement on the assistance of the Italian leadership in counteracting the violation of Versailles military and territorial restrictions in exchange for the recognition of Italian interests in Ethiopia.

On March 1, 1935, following a plebiscite, the Saarland was transferred to the jurisdiction of Germany, expanding its economic base. On February 3, 1935, Britain and France proposed to Germany negotiations on armaments and on a mutual assistance pact in Eastern Europe.

In response, Germany agreed to bilateral negotiations, which England immediately took advantage of. On March 4, 1935, a "White Paper" on the armed forces was published in England, and in France, on March 15, the terms of service in the army were extended, which gave Germany a reason to announce the rejection of the military restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles.

On March 10, 1935, the creation of the Air Force was officially announced in Berlin, and on March 16, the introduction of universal military service.

On March 18, Germany offered to guarantee all its borders, which was successfully used by her in propaganda.

On March 25-26 Anglo-German, and on March 28-29 Anglo-Soviet negotiations took place, during which the parties exchanged views, respectively, on German armaments and on the attitude of the USSR to events in Europe.

Germany's refusal to comply with the military restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles led to April 11-14, 1935 to the creation of the Anglo-French-Italian "Stresa Front".

On May 2, 1935, France agreed to sign a mutual assistance treaty with the USSR, which, however, was not supplemented by a military convention, which limited its significance. The incompleteness of the process of creating a Franco-Soviet alliance reflected the need for France to retain its allies in Eastern Europe, who were generally opposed to a possible union with the USSR. In addition, France was afraid of being accused of splitting Europe into military-political blocs and continued dialogue with Germany in the hope of a settlement.

In response to the conclusion of the Soviet-French and Soviet-Czechoslovak mutual assistance treaties, Germany on May 21, 1935 demanded a revision of the status of the Rhineland. The creation of the Stresa Front did not prevent England from continuing negotiations with Germany on naval armaments.

The conclusion of the Anglo-German agreement on June 18, 1935 was a bilateral violation of the Treaty of Versailles, dealt a blow to the Stresa Front, making it easier for Germany to play on the contradictions of the great European powers, worsened Anglo-French relations and stimulated Italy's expansionist claims in Ethiopia. On June 19, 1935, a Franco-Italian military agreement was signed on the use of the troops of the parties in Austria and on the Rhine.

England, interested in maintaining normal relations with Italy, on June 23, 1935, during the Anglo-Italian negotiations on the settlement of the Ethiopian problem on the basis of an exchange of territories, tacitly agreed to any actions of Italy in Africa.

Italy's attack on October 3, 1935 on Ethiopia and the discussion of this issue in the League of Nations in the context of the election campaign in England led to the establishment of economic sanctions against Italy on November 18, 1935. To please public opinion, England concentrated the Home Fleet in the Mediterranean, without ceasing secret searches for ways to satisfy Italy in Africa. A clash with Italy or its defeat was not the goal of England, because it could undermine the stability of the fascist regime and increase the danger of creating a "red Italy".

France refused to support England's naval demonstration in the Mediterranean and secretly violated economic sanctions. Germany, the USA, Japan, Austria, Hungary, Albania and a number of other countries that have expanded their presence in the Italian market did not participate in the sanctions. The crisis in Italy's relations with England and France was used by Germany to normalize relations with Rome. The desire to create a powerful counterbalance to England in Europe made it difficult for her to determine her foreign policy strategy of the United States, which used the escalation of tension around Ethiopia to adopt a law on neutrality in 1935, which made it difficult to cooperate with other countries in repelling aggression, but did not affect the economic aspects of relations.

In the face of cooling relations between England, France and Italy, Germany was preparing the remilitarization of the Rhineland, using as a pretext the forthcoming ratification of the Soviet-French treaty of mutual assistance. England, France and the United States had information about the intentions of Berlin, but for various reasons decided not to oppose them. England hoped to increase its influence on the foreign policy of France in the face of the growing German threat.

The French leadership, counting on the support of England and Italy, did not take any independent action, although, according to the Locarno Treaty, it had the right to do so. The US was interested in complicating Britain's position in Europe.

Therefore, when the German troops entered the Rhineland on March 7, 1936, they met no resistance from France. The League of Nations stated that Germany violated the Versailles and Locarno treaties, which gave France a formal reason to demand help from England and Italy.

However, Italy refused to cooperate until the economic sanctions imposed on it were lifted and the occupation of Ethiopia was recognized, while England referred to the absence of a threat to French territory.

The German adventure was a success, and Berlin immediately offered to replace the Locarno treaties with new non-aggression agreements, drawing England and France into futile negotiations. As a result of France's inaction, its positions in Europe and the system of alliances were dealt a severe blow, which strengthened the trend of "appeasement" in French politics.

England's desire to get closer to Turkey, which was supposed to be used as a counterbalance to Italy, led London to support the desire of Moscow and Ankara to revise the decisions of the Lausanne Conference on the regime of the Black Sea straits. Italy refused to participate in the conference until the lifting of economic sanctions, but even after their lifting, the position of Rome remained unchanged. During the conference in Montreux (June 22 - July 21, 1936), Britain and France agreed to change the regime of the Black Sea straits, taking into account the interests of the USSR.

The beginning of the Franco rebellion in Spain on July 18, 1936 helped to divert the attention of England and France from Central European problems. Germany and Italy almost immediately supported Franco, demonstrating to the whole world their anti-communist position, behind which was the desire to increase influence in Spain and the Western Mediterranean. The position of non-intervention taken by Britain, France and the United States was the best suited to the solution of this problem. Despite the complication of the situation in the Mediterranean, the British leadership considered it necessary, under the guise of pacifist rhetoric, to pursue a policy of "non-intervention", that is, in fact, to support Franco, who was seen as a guarantee against the "red danger", especially in the context of the expansion of Soviet intervention in the war.

Under British pressure, France also agreed to pursue a policy of non-intervention. The French leadership did not dare to further rapprochement with the USSR, fearing a deterioration in relations with England and Germany and the collapse of their alliances in Eastern Europe, which had a name and an anti-Soviet orientation. Such an indecisive policy of France led to the withdrawal of her former allies from her. The application of the US law on neutrality during the Spanish Civil War was a direct support for the rebels and interventionists and contributed to the strengthening of Germany and the formation of the German-Italian alliance, which was considered by Washington as a counterweight to England and France.

The changing situation in Europe stimulated the rapprochement of Germany, Italy and Japan. The occupation of Ethiopia and other African problems forced Italy to seek a counterbalance to England and France. On the basis of Franco's help, Italy drew closer and closer to Germany, and on October 26, 1936, the "Berlin - Rome Axis" was t

The entry of the USSR into the League of Nations, the signing of the Soviet-French and Soviet-Czechoslovak treaties in May 1935, and Moscow's support for the MPR required Japan to search for anti-Soviet allies in Europe, so Tokyo was favorably received by the German soundings that began in May 1935. In the autumn of 1935 and in the spring of 1936, new clashes broke out on the Mongolian-Manchurian border, which forced the USSR to openly declare its alliance with the MPR. This, in turn, hastened the conclusion of the Anti-Comintern Pact by Germany and Japan on November 25, 1936, which was reinforced by a new clash on the Manchurian-Soviet border near Lake Khanka on November 26-27, 1936. Thus, Japan clearly demonstrated to the whole world the anti-communist background of its actions. . . On December 2, 1936, an Italian-Japanese treaty was concluded, and on November 6, 1937, Italy joined the Anti-Comintern Pact. Within the framework of the German-Austrian agreement on July 11, 1936, the possibility of German influence on this country was ensured. Having promised Belgium a guarantee of its independence and territorial inviolability, Germany achieved its rejection of the Locarno agreements and the proclamation of neutrality on October 14, 1936.

Given the busyness of England and France with Spanish events, cooperation with Germany and Italy, and not fearing US intervention, Japan decided to move on to active operations on the continent. The Soviet-Manchurian incident on the Amur on June 29-30, 1937 gave Japan the opportunity to demonstrate to the West the immutability of its anti-communist course, and on July 7, 1937, Japan launched a war in China. Britain's proposal on July 12, 1937 to undertake a joint demarche in Tokyo and Nanjing was not supported by the United States, which, counting on the aggravation of Anglo-Japanese relations, on July 16, 1937 announced that they did not exclude the possibility of revising the results of the Washington Conference. The rivalry between England and the United States in the Far East was successfully used by the Japanese leadership. The conclusion of the Soviet-Chinese non-aggression pact on August 21, 1937 worsened Japanese-Soviet relations, but the parties only intensified the propaganda war in the press. In September 1937, the CCP and the Kuomintang created a united anti-JAPANESE front, while Britain and the United States recognized Japan's naval blockade of the Chinese coast. Britain's proposal in October 1937 to discuss the boycott of Japan did not meet with the support of the United States.

In this situation, the League of Nations once again demonstrated its inefficiency. Since the great powers, in the conditions of the onset of the crisis, tried not to spoil relations with Japan, which absorbed a significant part of their exports, the conference of the countries participating in the agreement of 9 powers in Brussels in November 1937, due to the general unwillingness to interfere in the Japanese-Chinese conflict, ended inconclusively, indicating the collapse of the Washington system. The American leadership, knowing the weakness of the Japanese economy, was not at all afraid of any anti-American military actions on its part. Britain and the United States were more concerned about their negotiations with Germany, while Japan successfully used the bogey of the Soviet threat. Even the attack of Japanese troops on British and American ships caused only diplomatic protests from England and the USA. True, since January 1938 the United States expanded its naval program, but the Anglo-American negotiations of December 1937- January 1938 on cooperation against Japan were interrupted, since each side sought to shift the main burden of action onto the partner. Japan's refusal to fulfill the requirement of a joint Anglo-French American note dated February 5, 1938 - to stop the construction of naval bases on the mandated islands, which began in 1935, which goes beyond

The Washington Accords also did not lead to any sanctions.

Since the spring of 1938, England and France have been connected by developments around Austria and Czechoslovakia, but Japan, which was experiencing a financial and economic crisis, decided to demonstrate its good relations with England and the USA. In May 1938, England handed over control of Chinese customs in the occupied territory to Japan, and in July secret Anglo-Japanese negotiations began, which aroused US concern and aggravated Anglo-American relations. In the context of growing public dissatisfaction with the connivance of Japanese aggression and sympathy for the USSR, which supplied China with weapons, the United States was forced on June 16, 1938 to impose a "moral embargo" on the supply of aviation equipment to Japan, which did not have any serious consequences. The offensive of the Japanese troops in the Yangtze River valley required certain actions from the USSR to divert the attention of Tokyo. The conflict at Lake Khasan, provoked by the Soviet side, caused a drop in the price of securities on the Tokyo Stock Exchange and allowed the parties to demonstrate their intransigence. November 3, 1938 Japan announced plans to create a "Great East Asia". This led to the beginning of Anglo-American naval negotiations on cooperation in the Pacific, which, however, ended in vain. In December 1938, England and the USA provided loans to China to keep it from capitulating, since the prolongation of the war fettered Japan and was beneficial to England, France, the USA and the USSR. Japan's captures in South China in February 1939 provoked protests from England, France and the United States, but Washington's proposal to back up these protests by sending their naval forces to the region was objected to by Britain.

The strengthening of the German economy and the new decline in world production that began in 1937 contributed to the fact that Germany began to demand more and more clearly the revision of the territorial decisions of the Treaty of Versailles. It was from 1937 that the idea of "appeasement" of Germany at the expense of Eastern Europe and the USSR came to the fore in British foreign policy. Satisfaction of Germany's expansionist claims, in the opinion of the British leadership, should have led to a new "pact of four". Separate negotiations between the United States and Britain with Germany in November 1937 showed the German leadership that neither Britain, nor the United States, nor France would intervene in the event of the annexation of Austria, Sudetenland and Danzig, if these changes did not lead to war in Europe. Since the autumn of 1937, German pressure on Austria has been growing. During the Anglo-French negotiations on November 29-30, 1937, the parties agreed that their interests in Eastern Europe were not of a fundamental nature and did not require anti-German actions. Austria's attempts to find support in England and France proved futile, and on March 12-13, 1938, she was annexed by Germany, which significantly improved its strategic position in the center of Europe. On March 17, 1938, the USSR proposed to convene a conference to combat aggression, but England, fearing a split of Europe into military-political blocs, spoke out against this idea.

The aggravation of the situation around Czechoslovakia in April May 1938 demonstrated the unwillingness of Britain and France to interfere in the affairs of Eastern Europe. The proposals of the USSR to hold military negotiations with France and Czechoslovakia on April 27 and May 13 were not accepted, because it would be "a misfortune if Czechoslovakia was saved thanks to Soviet assistance" tried to¹². England revive the "Stresa Front" and on April 16, 1938 recognized the capture of Ethiopia by Italy in exchange for maintaining the status quo in the Mediterranean, but failed to split the German-Italian axis. The May Crisis of 1938 showed that politics

non-intervention is fraught with the loss of Anglo-French influence on the development of events, therefore, at the height of the crisis, both governments announced on May 21, 1938, intervention in the event of German aggression, which forced Germany to retreat. However, instead of helping Czechoslovakia, Britain and France stepped up pressure on her in favor of transferring strategically important border areas to Germany. The British leadership feared that intransigence in the Sudeten question could lead to a German-American rapprochement, and even to the collapse of the Nazi regime, which did not meet the interests of England. The United States, for its part, through its ambassador in London on July 20, 1938, hinted to Berlin that in the event of cooperation between the United States and Germany, Washington would support the German demands on England or would do everything to satisfy the German demands on Czechoslovakia. Italy during the Czechoslovak crisis tried to distract Germany from the Mediterranean problems and eliminate the stronghold of French influence in Central Europe.

In the summer of 1938, the British leadership sought to find a new compromise between the great powers of Europe.

But instead of putting pressure on Germany, England and France, supported by the United States, continued to demand concessions from Czechoslovakia in the name of maintaining peace in Europe, since the war could contribute to its Bolshevization.

Thus, Czechoslovakia became a bargaining chip in the policy of appeasement of Germany and the basis of a new compromise. The British leadership proceeded from the fact that a weak Germany did not want, and a strong France could not, consolidate British hegemony. Therefore, it was necessary to strengthen Germany, weaken France, and at the same time isolate the USSR, which on September 21 again proposed holding a conference to work out measures against aggression.

As a result, on September 29-30, 1938, during the Munich Conference, England and France handed over the Sudetenland to Germany in exchange for declarations of non-aggression. England regarded the Munich Agreement as a fundamental basis for further Anglo-German compromise on all cardinal problems.

The escalation of the crisis and the policy of "appeasement" pursued by Britain and France allowed Italy to play the role of a peacemaker at the Munich Conference and, playing on the contradictions of the great powers, by the beginning of 1939 significantly increase its role in European affairs. However, the Italian leadership was forced to abandon its aspirations in Central Europe and in favor of Germany.

As a result of the Munich Agreement, the system of French military alliances collapsed and the Franco-German declaration on border guarantees and consultations could not
replace her.

In December 1938, France recognized the Italian occupation of Ethiopia. This was the apogee of the appeasement policy, which dealt a colossal blow not only to the influence of England and France in Europe, but also to the entire Versailles system, which practically ceased to exist. In fact, the Western countries themselves destroyed the system of international relations in Europe that they created after the First World War.

All these well-known events are simply ignored by V. Suvorov.

But if you do not turn a blind eye to them, then the question arises why it is the Soviet Union that is to blame for the fact that the Versailles-Washington system of international relations was falling apart before our eyes, and the Western great powers actually

pandered to Japan, Italy and Germany?

Considering that all these three states covered up their expansion with anti-communist rhetoric, Moscow could not ignore the possibility of creating a so-called "united imperialist anti-Soviet front."

It is quite natural that the USSR sought to prevent the consolidation of the other great powers, rightly perceiving this as the main threat to its interests. Under these conditions, the struggle for "collective security" became Moscow's foreign policy tactic, aimed at strengthening the weight of the USSR in international affairs and at preventing the consolidation of other great powers without its participation.

However, the events of 1938 clearly showed that the Soviet Union was not only still far from becoming an equal subject of European politics, but also continued to be considered by the European great powers as an object of their
politicians.

Under these conditions, only a new aggravation of the crisis in Europe allowed the USSR to return to big politics as a great power.

These aspirations of Moscow were facilitated by the fact that during the political crises of the 1930s . The Versailles-Washington system in Europe and the Far East was practically destroyed, which could not but lead to another clash between the great powers.

In this sense, we can say that the Second World War was a natural phenomenon in the period of changing systems of international relations and could hardly have been prevented, since the uneven economic development led to a change in the balance of power of the great powers, each of which, to one degree or another, turned out to be interested in the reorganization of the Versailles-Washington system of international relations. Germany, the USA and the USSR were striving for a complete reorganization of the system of international relations, England and France were ready for some changes that did not affect their leading position in the world, and Italy and Japan tried to expand their influence at the regional level.

The Second World War was a reflection of the clash of interests of the great powers in the CONDITIONS of the collapse of the Versailles-Washington system, and, like previous conflicts of the great powers, was of an imperialist nature, complemented by the liberation struggle of the occupied countries and territories. Thus, we consider the Second World War as a set of wars of the great powers between themselves and other countries for the expansion of their influence and the revision of the borders established in 1919-1922 .

A new aggravation of the situation in the spring of 1939 was not long in coming.

On March 14 , Slovakia, on the advice of Germany, declared independence; on March 15, German troops entered the Czech Republic, which was included in the Third Reich as the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

On March 14-17 , Hungary, with the approval of Berlin, occupied the Transcarpathian Ukraine. On March 22 , Germany obtained from Lithuania the return of Memel (Klaipeda) to her, and Italy occupied Albania on April 7-10 . All these events marked the beginning of the pre-war political crisis.

Naturally, under these conditions, each great power expected to use the situation in its own interests. England and France sought

to direct German expansion to the East, which should have led to a clash between Germany and the USSR, their mutual weakening, and would have strengthened the position of London and Paris on the world stage.

Naturally, the role of the "sacrificial lamb" did not smile at Moscow at all, and the Soviet leadership did everything to avert the threat of being drawn into a possible European war, which was supposed to weaken Germany, England and France. This, in turn, would allow the USSR to take the position of a kind of arbiter on which the outcome of the war depends, and to maximize its influence on the continent.

For its part, Germany, well aware of the impossibility of a simultaneous clash with a coalition of great powers, counted on a local operation against Poland, which would improve its strategic position for further struggle for hegemony in Europe with England, France and the USSR.

Italy sought to obtain new concessions from England and France as a result of their conflict with Germany, but she herself was in no hurry to fight. The United States needed a war in Europe in order to rule out the possibility of an Anglo-German alliance, finally take England's place in the world and weaken the USSR, which would allow it to become the main world power. Japan, taking advantage of the employment of the other great powers to Europe, intended to end the war in China on its own terms, to obtain from the United States consent to strengthen Japanese influence in the Far East and, under favorable conditions, to participate in the war again.

During the political crisis of 1939, two military-political blocs emerged in Europe : Anglo-French and German-Italian, each of which was interested in an agreement with the USSR. For its part, Moscow got the opportunity to choose with whom and under what conditions it should negotiate, and used it to the maximum, balancing between these military-political blocs. International relations in the spring and summer of 1939 in Europe were a tangled tangle of diplomatic activities of the great powers, each of which sought to achieve its own goals. Events developed in parallel in several directions: there were secret or other Anglo-French Soviet, Anglo-German and Soviet-German negotiations, the formation of the Anglo-French-Polish and German-Italian coalitions took place. Moscow in its calculations proceeded from the fact that the outbreak of war in Europe - both with the participation of the USSR in the Anglo-French bloc, and while maintaining its neutrality - opened up new prospects for strengthening Soviet influence on the continent. An alliance with England and France would make Moscow an equal partner with all the ensuing consequences, and the Soviet Union's neutrality in the face of the weakening of both belligerents would allow it to take the position of a kind of arbiter on which the outcome of the war depends. Based on such calculations, the Soviet foreign policy course was determined.

Continuing to act within the framework of the concept of "collective security", the Soviet leadership tried to achieve an alliance with Britain and France. However, the unsuccessful Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations, which showed that London and Paris were not ready for an equal partnership with Moscow, and the threat of an Anglo-German agreement forced the Soviet Union to pay more attention to the German proposals to normalize bilateral relations. The Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact, signed on August 23, 1939, was a significant success for Soviet diplomacy. The USSR managed to stay out of the European war, while gaining considerable freedom of hands in Eastern Europe and a wider

room for maneuver between warring factions in their own interests. Thanks to the agreement with Germany, the USSR for the first time in its history received recognition of its interests in Eastern Europe from one of the great European powers. In 1939, Europe was split into three military-political camps: Anglo-French, German-Italian and Soviet, each of which sought to achieve its own goals, which could not but lead to war.

At the same time, it should be remembered that the Soviet-German treaty did not provide for any real territorial changes or occupation of "spheres of interest". Unfortunately, now, knowing further events,¹³ some researchers tend to believe that Hitler and Stalin already then, on the night of August 24, knew in advance what exactly would happen in the next 38 days. Naturally, this was not the case in reality. In general, the situation at the end of August 1939 was so confusing that politicians and diplomats of all countries, including the Soviet Union, tried to sign the most vague agreements, which, depending on the situation, could be interpreted in any way.

Moreover, on August 24, no one knew whether a German-Polish war would arise at all, or some kind of compromise will be reached, as was the case in 1938.

In this situation, the term "territorial and political reorganization" of Eastern Europe used in the secret additional protocol to the non-aggression pact could also be interpreted as a variant of the new Munich, that is, it would allow Moscow to declare its interests at a possible international conference. And the concept of "sphere of interest" in general could be interpreted as . Thus, the Soviet-German pact was an agreement designed for any situation. whatever¹⁴ Of course, Moscow was interested in defending its own interests, including at the expense of the interests of others, but this, in fact, is an axiom of the foreign policy strategy of any state. Why is it that only the Soviet Union is blamed for such actions?

An important problem in the historiography of the events of 1939 is the question of the connection between the Soviet-German pact and the outbreak of World War II. Researchers are divided on this issue. Many authors follow Western historiography, which is based on the position of the British leadership, formulated on August 30, 1939, that "the fate of war and peace is now in the hands of the USSR" and its intervention can prevent the outbreak of World War II¹⁵, believe that the pact contributed

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According to others, the pact had no effect on the outbreak of the German-Polish war (and World War II too), since it was planned as early as April 1939¹⁷.

R.A. Medvedev even believes that the pact forced England and France to declare, Germany war¹⁸ without, however, arguing this thesis. To give reasoned answer to this, probably the most important question, should turn to the consideration of the events that took place from 23 August to 1 September in Europe.

In August 1939, the question of clarifying the position of Britain and the USSR in the event of a war in Poland entered a decisive phase for Germany.

August 2 - 3 Germany actively probed Moscow, August 7 - London, 10 August - Moscow, August 11 - London, August 14-15 - Moscow.

On August 21 , **London was asked to accept Goering on August 23** for negotiations, **and Moscow to accept Ribbentrop for signing a non-aggression pact. Both the USSR and England agreed!**

Based on the need, first of all, to sign an agreement with the USSR, on August 22 , Hitler canceled Goering's flight, although this was reported to London only on August 24 . In the meantime, the British leadership, fearing to disrupt Goering's visit, banned the mobilization. Hitler's choice can be explained by a number of factors. Firstly, the German command was confident that the Wehrmacht was able to defeat Poland, even if it was supported by England and France. Whereas the performance of the USSR on the side of the anti-German coalition meant a catastrophe. Secondly, the agreement with Moscow was supposed to localize the German-Polish war, keep England and France from interfering, and give Germany the opportunity to resist the likely economic blockade of the Western powers. Thirdly, the subjective moment also played an important role: England too often made concessions to Germany, and in Berlin, apparently, they got used to this to a certain extent. The USSR, on the contrary, was too uncompromising, and the readiness for an agreement expressed by Moscow should have been used without delay. In addition, this would finally bury the already not very successful Anglo-French-Soviet military negotiations.

On August 22 , **Hitler spoke to the military. Outlining the general political situation, he concluded that the situation was favorable to Germany, the intervention of England and France in the German-Polish conflict was unlikely, they would not be able to help Poland, and an agreement would be concluded with the USSR, which would also reduce the threat of an economic blockade of Germany. Under these conditions, it is worth taking a risk and defeating Poland, while at the same time holding back the West. At the same time, it was necessary to quickly defeat the Polish troops, since "the destruction of Poland remains in the foreground even if the war starts in the West," Hitler considered "the treaty (with the USSR) as a reasonable deal. In relation to Stalin, of course, one must always be on the alert, but at the moment he (Hitler) sees in the pact with Stalin's chance to turn off England from the conflict with Poland"**²⁰.

Confident that he would succeed, Hitler in the morning of August 23 , when Ribbentrop was still flying to Moscow, ordered an attack on Poland at 4.30 am on August 26 .

On August 23 , **France announced that it would support Poland, but the Supreme Council of National Defense decided that no military action would be taken against Germany unless it attacked France itself. On the same day, Chamberlain's letter was handed over to Hitler, in which London announced that in the event of war, England would support Poland, but at the same time showed readiness for an agreement with Germany. Goering's visit was still expected in England, and it was only on August 24 that it became clear that he would not come. On the same day, Germany notified Poland that British guarantees were an obstacle to the settlement of the conflict. Fearing that Warsaw would make concessions and rapprochement with Berlin, England signed an agreement on mutual assistance with Poland on August 25 , but no military agreement was concluded.**

On the same day, Germany notified England that "after the solution of the Polish problem" she would propose a comprehensive agreement of cooperation and peace, up to guarantees of the existence and assistance of the British Empire.

But on the evening of August 25 , Berlin became aware of the Anglo-Polish treaty, and Italy, which had previously expressed fears about the threat of a world war, announced its refusal to participate in the war. All this led to

that at about 20 o'clock the order was given to cancel the attack on Poland, and the army managed to be kept literally at the last moment²².

On August 26, the Western Allies recommended that Poland order its troops to refrain from an armed response to German provocations. The next day, London and Paris offered Warsaw to organize a mutual exchange of population with Germany. Nevertheless, in Poland they were sure that "to date Hitler has not yet decided to start a war ... in no case will anything decisive happen in the near future" that Germany will decide to fight.²³ England and France were also still unsure

On August 26, instead of 300 thousand reservists in England, only 35 thousand were called up, since it was believed that the Anglo-Polish treaty would keep Germany out of the war. On the same day, information was received from London to Berlin that England would not intervene in the event of a German attack on Poland or would declare war, but wo²⁴

On August 28, England refused the German proposals for a guarantee of the empire, recommending that Berlin begin direct negotiations with Warsaw. If Germany agrees to a peaceful settlement, then England agreed to consider at a future conference the general problems of Anglo-German relations. London again warned Berlin that in the event of war, England would support Poland, but at the same time promised to influence the Poles in favor of negotiations with Germany.

At the same time, Poland was recommended to expedite negotiations with Germany. London also asked Mussolini to hint to Hitler that "if the settlement of the present crisis is limited to the return of Danzig and sections of the "corridor" of Germany, then, as it seems to us, can be found, within a reasonable period of time, solution without²⁵. Naturally, Warsaw should not have known about this. If war" German-Polish "negotiations led to an agreement, which the British government is counting on, the way would be opened to a broad agreement between Germany and England"²⁶.

On the afternoon of 28 August, Hitler set a tentative date for the attack on 1 September. Using the British proposals for negotiations, the German leadership decided to demand "the annexation of Danzig, passage through the Polish corridor and a referendum (similar to the one held in the Saarland). England may accept our terms. Poland, apparently not. Split!"²⁷ On August 29, Germany agreed to direct negotiations with Poland on the terms of the transfer of Danzig, a plebiscite in the "Polish corridor" and a guarantee of Poland's new borders by Germany, Italy, England, France and the USSR. The arrival of Polish representatives for the talks was expected on 30 August. By conveying these proposals to England, Hitler hoped that "he would drive a wedge between England, France and Poland"²⁸.

On the same day, Berlin notified Moscow of England's proposals to settle the German-Polish conflict and that Germany had set as a condition the preservation of the treaty with the USSR, the alliance with Italy and would not participate in an international conference without the participation of the USSR, along with which solve all the problems of Eastern Europe²⁹.

On August 30, England reaffirmed its consent to influence Poland, provided that there would be no war and Germany would stop the anti-Polish press campaign. In this case, London confirmed its consent to convene an international conference in the future. On this day, the Wehrmacht still had not received an order to attack Poland, since there was a possibility that England would go

to make concessions, and then the offensive will be delayed until September 2 , and in this case , “there will be no war at all,” since “the arrival of the Poles in Berlin = 30 subjugation” .

On August 30 , England received precise information about Germany's proposals for settling the Polish problem. However, London did not notify Warsaw of these proposals, and, hoping to still delay the war, on the night of August 31 , notified Berlin of the approval of direct German-Polish negotiations, which were to begin over time.

Early on the morning of August 31, Hitler signed Directive No. 1, according to which The attack on Poland was to begin at 4:45 am on September 1, 1939 .

It was not until the afternoon of August 31 that Britain sent Germany's proposals for settling the crisis to Poland, with the recommendation that they respond positively and expedite negotiations with Germany.

At 12.00 on August 31, Warsaw told London that it was ready for negotiations with Berlin, provided that Germany and Poland mutually guarantee the non-use of force, preserve the situation in Danzig, and England during the negotiations will support the Polish side. However, the Polish ambassador in Berlin was ordered to play for time, because in Warsaw they still believed that “Hitler would not dare to start a war. Hitler only plays on the nerves and pulls the strings to the extreme limits.

As a result, at 18.00 , Ribbentrop, in a conversation with the Polish ambassador in Berlin, stated the absence of the Polish emergency commissioner and refused to negotiate.

At 21.15 - 21.45 Germany officially handed over its proposals to Poland to the ambassadors of England, France and the United States and announced that Warsaw had refused to negotiate. At the same time, German radio reported on these proposals to resolve the crisis and on Polish provocations on the border. On the same day, Italy offered Germany mediation services in resolving the crisis, but, having been refused, notified England and France that she would not fight.

On September 1 , Germany attacked Poland, and the European crisis escalated into a war, which Britain and France entered on September 3 .

Thus, the Soviet-German non-aggression pact was not the detonator of the war in Europe.

Instead of honorably fulfilling their allied obligations to Poland, England and France continued to seek an agreement with Germany, which naturally gave rise to confidence in Berlin that the Western allies would not interfere in a possible German-Polish war.

In fact, it was the diplomatic games of London and Paris that pushed Germany to war with Poland. However, the Soviet Union is now most unexpectedly to blame.

In September 1939 , Britain and France had an excellent opportunity to defeat Germany rather quickly, but, as is well known, this did not happen for various reasons.

As a result, “refusing to take advantage of the situation that had developed at the very beginning of the war

situation, the Western powers not only left Poland in trouble, but also plunged the whole world into five years of destructive war" ³³.

After the defeat of Poland, Germany had a chance to wage war on one front, which was successfully used by her in 1940-1941. Of course, V. Suvorov interprets the Soviet-German non-aggression pact of August 23, 1939 as an "alliance with Hitler"

³⁴.

Unfortunately, some domestic historians.

True, as a rule, in Russian historiography, a similar characterization is applied to the Soviet-German Treaty of Friendship and Border signed on September 28, 1939. So, A.D. Bogaturov believes that now "the union between Moscow and Berlin has been formalized by a full-scale interstate agreement"

³⁵.

M.I. Semiryaga also believes that the USSR actually entered into a military-political alliance with Germany, and, according to AM Nekrich, Soviet-German relations from September 1939 to November 1940 were "as if an unfinished military-political union"

³⁶.

E.L. Valeva simply declared the Soviet Union an ally of the Third Reich

³⁷.

It is curious that no arguments in favor of these "bold" hypotheses have ever been given, and, in fact, there are none. Indeed, in reality in 1939-1941, there was no talk of any military-political Soviet-German alliance, either "actual" or "incomplete", not to mention the fact that neither in the non-aggression pact, not a word was said about this in the contract of September 28

³⁸.

Neither Moscow nor Berlin ever viewed their relationship in this way, although they allowed such propaganda statements that could be interpreted as a certain tendency for further rapprochement between them. However, things did not go further than this.

V. Suvorov put forward another fantastic accusation against the Soviet Union, believing that "the exact day when Stalin started the Second World War is August 19, 1939."

This conclusion is explained very simply: "the beginning of the secret mobilization was the actual entry into the Second World War. Stalin understood this and deliberately gave the order for secret mobilization on August 19, 1939. From that day on, with any development of events, the war could no longer be stopped."

³⁹.

Formulating such a categorical conclusion, V. Suvorov leaves the reader in the dark, why "the beginning of the secret mobilization was the actual entry" into the war? The entire military history of mankind testifies that the actual entry into a war means either its formal declaration or the immediate start of hostilities. No other actions of the parties constitute entry into the war. Secret mobilization, of course, is a preparation for entering the war, but the war may not start (this is decided by the political leadership) and then, as a rule, demobilization follows. An example of such a development of events is the "Czechoslovak crisis" of September 1938, when in a number of countries, including the USSR, partial or general mobilization was carried out, but the crisis was "settled"

Munich agreement, and no war arose. Why, based on the fact that the Soviet government decided on June 26, 1938, to carry out mobilization measures in case of war in Europe, not declare this particular date the "exact" day "when Stalin started the Second World War"?

Even if we take the point of view of V. Suvorov, then it is not clear why exactly the actions of the USSR are the beginning of the Second World War? After all, Germany began secret mobilization on August 16, 1939, first in East Prussia, and from August 18, pre-mobilization measures swept the whole country, resulting in a general secret mobilization of the Wehrmacht on August 25.

From August 24, 1939, France also conducted covert partial mobilizations.

However, there is no escape from the fact that it was the German attack on Poland that marked the beginning of the Second World War. Thus, V. Suvorov's thesis that Stalin started World War II is an outright lie.

Equally unsubstantiated is V. Suvorov's statement that Stalin gave the order for secret mobilization on August 19, 1939. Some researchers cite Stalin's so-called speech, allegedly delivered on that day to members of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, as confirmation⁴⁰ of this version.

However, as S. Z. Sluch convincingly showed, this "document" is falsification of the French secret services⁴¹.

True, an unsuccessful attempt was made to prove the fact of Stalin's speech in order to substantiate the false version that the USSR and Germany "bear equal responsibility for the outbreak of the Second World War"⁴².

As you know, on August 19, the Soviet government agreed to the arrival of the German Foreign Minister I. Ribbentrop in Moscow on August 26 - 27, the stump of the conclusion of the non-aggression pact

Measures in the Red Army to transfer rifle divisions of triple deployment to ordinary divisions began in accordance with the decision of the Defense Committee under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR No. 199ss of July 13, updated on July 14 by the decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, decisions of the Main Military Council of the Red Army of July 15 and 21 and orders of the people's commissar of defense of August 15. On September 1, 1939, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks approved the "Plan for the Reorganization of the Ground Forces of the Red Army for 1939-44 1940." Indeed, on August 30, a TASS refutation appeared in the Soviet press, according to which "in view of the aggravation of the situation in the eastern regions of Europe and in view of the possibility of all sorts of surprises, the Soviet command decided to strengthen the numerical strength of the garrison

However, only late in the evening on September 6, 1939, an order was given to start covert mobilization in the Leningrad, Kalinin, Moscow, Belorussian and Kiev special, Oryol and Kharkov military districts, during which 2,610,136 reserve servicemen were called up.⁴⁵

Thus, no orders for "secret mobilization" Stalin August 19 1939 did not give.

The passive position of England and France in the outbreak of World War II allowed the Soviet Union to intensify its foreign policy in Eastern Europe and begin to revise the western borders imposed on it in 1920-1921. In the autumn of 1939- summer 1940, Western Ukraine, Western Belarus,

Karelian Isthmus, Ladoga Karelia, the Baltic States, Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, with a total area of about 452 thousand square meters. km and a population of 23⁴⁶ million people

As a result, the western borders were moved away from the vital centers of the country and new opportunities were created for the deployment of the Soviet armed forces. This significantly improved the strategic positions and strengthened the defense capability of the USSR. Thus, successfully maneuvering between the two warring blocs, the Soviet leadership was able to significantly expand the territory of the Soviet Union, regaining control over strategically important regions, most of which were previously part of the Russian Empire and were lost during the Civil War as a result of external aggression.

Therefore, the events of 1939-1940 . were, in a certain sense, Soviet revenge for the defeats of the Civil War. In addition, these accessions became a precedent that the Soviet leadership could refer to when solving the problem of the post-war structure of Europe. In international legal terms, all these territories were fixed and part of the USSR by treaties of 1945-1947.

Were the actions of the USSR against Poland, Finland, the Baltic countries and Romania aggression? (According to the 1933 convention on the definition of aggression , proposed precisely by the Soviet side, an aggressor was recognized as one who makes a "declaration of war on another state; an invasion of its armed forces, even without a declaration of war, on the territory of another state; an attack by its land, sea or air forces , even without a declaration of war, into the territory, ships or aircraft of another state; a naval blockade of the coasts or ports of another state; support given to armed bands which, being formed on its territory, would invade the territory of another state, or refusal despite the demand of the invaded State to take, on its own territory, all measures in its power to deprive the named gangs of all assistance, or

patronage."

Moreover, the convention specifically stipulated that "no consideration of a political, military, economic or other order can justify aggression" (including the internal system and its shortcomings; unrest caused by strikes, revolutions, counter-revolutions or civil war; violation of the interests of another state ; rupture of diplomatic and economic relations; economic or financial blockade; disputes, including territorial and border incidents)

47 .

Based on the content of the convention, it turns out that the Soviet Union committed aggression against Poland and Finland. However, in relation to the Baltic countries, the only action of Moscow that fell under the scope of this convention was the imposition of a naval blockade of the region. The entry of Soviet troops into the territory of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania was preceded by diplomatic negotiations that ended with the agreement of the Baltic governments with the Soviet version of solving problems in bilateral relations. With regard to Romania, the USSR did not commit any actions falling under the scope of this convention. Not to mention the fact that the application of the term "Soviet aggression" to the territory of Bessarabia occupied by Romania is generally impossible.

Northern Bukovina was transferred to the Soviet Union as a result of negotiations. As A. Taylor rightly noted , "Russia's rights to the Baltic states and the eastern part of Poland (and even more so Bessarabia. - M M.) were much more

reasonable in comparison with the rights of the United States to New Mexico" ⁴⁸.

In this sense, it is impossible not to join the opinion of N.M. Karamzin: "Let foreigners condemn the division of Poland: we have taken our own" ⁴⁹.

As a result, the Soviet Union again managed to combine the political and geopolitical borders between the "Western" and "Russian" civilizations, as was already the case at the end of the 18th century with the ⁵⁰. *It's clear that it was a big one. success of Soviet foreign policy.*

Trying to substantiate the thesis of Germany's "preventive war" against the USSR, V. Suvorov writes a lot and too emotionally about the development of the Soviet armed forces and the beginning of their deployment in the Western theater of wearable operations (TVD) in May 1941. True, he diligently passes over in silence the question of why the Soviet leadership should not have improved the Red Army?

After all, it is quite obvious that the outbreak of World War II not only provided new opportunities for expanding Soviet influence on the world stage as a result of the weakening of the belligerent states, but also sharply aggravated the threats to the security of the Soviet Union. Actually, exactly the same process of development of the armed forces at the same time was going on not only in England, Germany and Italy, which fought among themselves, and Japan, which fought in China, but also in the neutral USA. There is no fundamental difference in the actions of Washington, London, Berlin, Rome, Moscow and Tokyo in this regard, but apparently the Soviet Union cannot do what other great powers are doing.

As, however, it is impossible to worry about ensuring your safety. Although it is quite obvious that the ancient Roman maxim "if you want peace, prepare for war" is not outdated even today, not to mention the period of the Second World War.

It is equally obvious that as Soviet-German relations worsened, which began after the negotiations in Berlin in November 1940, the Soviet leadership could not help thinking about the need for military security of the country. Soviet diplomatic and military documents of 1939-1941 introduced into scientific circulation in recent years. show that no foreign policy zigzags prevented the Soviet leadership from considering Germany as a potential adversary and carefully preparing for war. Soviet strategy was based on the classic principle: "Attack is the best defense!"

The main idea of Soviet military planning was that the Red Army, under the cover of the troops deployed on the border of the western border districts, would complete the concentration of forces intended for war on the theater of operations and go over to a sudden decisive offensive, striking at the German troops concentrating near the Soviet borders. Today it is quite obvious that "an offensive plan is the optimal solution to the problem of national defense for the USSR" ⁵¹.

For half a year, the Soviet General Staff was engaged in resolving the issue of the most advantageous direction for concentrating the main efforts of troops in the war with Germany. As a result, it was concluded that delivering the main blow in the South-West direction while simultaneously pinning down the enemy through private operations in the North-West direction and in Romania would solve several key strategic tasks and ensure the most effective actions of the Red Army.

Moreover, as A.V. Shubin correctly noted , *"the plan for such a strike was not a response to the actions of the German command, but the response to the threat as a whole"* ⁵²

The clash of Soviet-German interests in the Balkans, which became apparent at the beginning of 1941, prompted Moscow to begin concrete preparations for an attack on Germany. The first half of 1941 was devoted to the careful development of this strike, and in May-June 1941, the preparation of the Soviet Union for a war with Germany entered its final stage, when a full-scale process of concentrating 79.2 % of the available forces of the Red Army on the future theater of operations began, due to "the desire to preempt their opponents in the deployment of armed forces to deliver the first strikes with larger forces and capture

strategic initiative from the very beginning of hostilities" ⁵³

In total, 240 of the 303 divisions *available in the Red Army were allocated* for the war with Germany , *which, after mobilization, would have numbered over 6 million people, about 70 thousand guns and mortars, over 15 thousand tanks and up to 12 thousand aircraft.*

Since the strategic concentration and deployment of troops is the final stage of preparation for war, the question of determining the possible time frame for a Soviet attack on Germany is of particular interest.

"All-knowing" V. Suvorov calls the "exact" date of the planned Soviet attacks on Germany - July 6, 1941 , in fact, nothing justified.

The author's motivation boils down mainly to the fact that July 6 , 1941 was . But it can Sunday, and Stalin and Zhukov allegedly liked to attack on Sunday ⁵⁴ hardly be taken seriously. The author's assumptions are not supported by the quotation from the book "The Initial Period of the War", the meaning of which is distorted by him. This book says that "the fascist German command (and not the " German troops ", like Suvorov's. - M.M.) literally in the last two weeks before the war (that is, from June 8 to June 22 , and not " for two weeks", as in the "Icebreaker". - M.M.) managed to preempt our troops in completing the deployment and thereby create favorable conditions for the capture . ⁵⁵ Moreover, this quote by Suvorov strategic initiative at the beginning of the war" is ⁵⁶ given twice: once correctly, and the second - distorted

The introduction into scientific circulation of a number of operational planning documents of the General Staff of the Red Army made it possible to transfer the consideration of this issue to the solid ground of facts. As far as can be judged from the available documents, for the first time the exact date of a possible strike against Germany appeared in the operational plan of March 11 , 1941 , which provided for the "offensive to begin on ⁵⁷ . Apparently not by chance. 12.6" order of the People's Commissar of Defense No. on the personal accounting of losses and the burial of the dead personnel of the Red Army in wartime", demanded "by May 1 , 1941 , to supply the troops with medallions and leaflets according to wartime states" it is known that on June 12, 1941, no hostile actions were taken against Germany ⁵⁸ . However, as by the USSR did not have. It is not possible to unequivocally answer the question about the reasons for the postponement of this period due to the state of the source base. We can only make some assumptions about this.

"I don't remember all the motives for canceling such a decision, " Molotov recalled 40 years later. - But it seems to me that the flight to England of Hitler's deputy for the party, Rudolf Hess, played a major role here. NKVD intelligence reported to us that Hess, on behalf of Hitler, offered Great Britain to make peace and take part in a military campaign against the USSR ... If we were at that time (emphasis mine. - M M.)

they themselves unleashed a war against Germany, moving their troops to Europe, then England would immediately enter into an alliance with Germany ... And not only England, We could find ourselves alone in the face of the entire capitalist⁵⁷ world ... "

Fearing a possible end to the Anglo-German war, the Kremlin deemed it necessary to delay the attack on Germany. Only after receiving information about the failure of the Hess mission and making sure that the Anglo-German military operations in the Eastern Mediterranean would continue, in Moscow, apparently, they decided not to postpone the implementation of their plans any longer. On May 24, 1941, a top secret meeting of the military-political leadership was held in Stalin's office in the Kremlin, at which, probably, the issue of a new deadline for completing military preparations was decided. Unfortunately, in such a serious matter, we are forced to confine ourselves to this working hypothesis, which has yet to be confirmed or refuted on the basis of drawing on new, as yet inaccessible documents.

Was there an exact date planned at all? Only a comprehensive study of documents that have not yet been declassified for the most part, reflecting both the process of military planning and the conduct of measures to prepare for the offensive, will make it possible to give a final answer to this question. At the same time, the dates known to historians for carrying out measures to increase the combat readiness of the troops allow us to assume that such a date was nevertheless determined.

According to V.N. Kiseleva, V.D. Danilov and P.N. Bobylev, the offensive of the Red Army was possible in July 1941 .⁶⁰

Available documents reflecting the process of preparing the Red Army for war indicate that most of the measures to increase the combat readiness of the troops of the western border districts were to be completed by July 1, 1941. By this day, it was planned to complete the formation of all units deployed in these districts; arm the tank regiments of the mechanized corps, which lacked tanks, with anti-tank artillery; complete the transition to a new organization of aviation logistics, autonomous from combat units; to concentrate troops of the districts in the border areas; camouflage airfields and military equipment.

At the same time, the concentration and deployment of the second strategic echelon of the Red Army was being completed. So, the troops of the 21st Army completed their concentration by July 2 , the 22nd Army - by July 3 , the 20th Army - by July 5 , the 19th Army - by July 7 , the 16th, 24th and 28th th Army - by July 10 . By July 5 , it was necessary to complete the organization of false airfields in the 500-kilometer border strip.

By July 15 , it was planned to complete the construction of air defense facilities in Kiev and the camouflage of warehouses, workshops and other military facilities in the border zone, a
also put all available weapons in the constructed structures fortified
areas on the new frontier. Based on the fact that "the enemy preempted the Soviet troops in their deployment by about 25 days," the full concentration and deployment of the Red Army in the Western TND was to be completed by July 15 , 1941 .

Thus, it is this date that can serve as a lower limit in the search for an accurate answer to the question of the timing of a possible Soviet attack on Germany. However, clarifying the issue of the planned date of the Soviet attack on Germany requires further research with the involvement of new documentary material.

*It is clear that both Germany and the Soviet Union carefully prepared for the war, and from the beginning of 1941 this process entered its final stage, which made the outbreak of the Soviet-German war inevitable. It was in 1941, whoever initiated it. Initially, the Wehrmacht planned to prepare the invasion by May 16, and the Red Army - by June 12, 1941. Then Berlin postponed the attack, moving it to June 22, a month later, Moscow did the same, setting a new tentative date for the completion of military preparations - July 15, 1941. As is now known, both sides in their calculations proceeded from the fact that the war would start on their own initiative. However, since in their calculations the parties proceeded from different dates for the start of the war, the German command, due to a random combination of circumstances, managed to preempt the Soviet troops in completing the deployment and thereby create favorable conditions for seizing the strategic initiative at the beginning of the war.*⁶²

Unfortunately, Soviet intelligence failed to reliably establish Germany's intentions for the summer of 1941, so the Soviet leadership failed to correctly assess the threat of a German attack. Correctly noting the growing crisis in Soviet-German relations, Moscow believed that there was still time before the final break, both for diplomatic maneuvers and for the completion of military preparations. Unfortunately, Stalin, fearing an Anglo-German compromise, delayed the attack on Germany for at least a month, which, as we now know, was the only chance to thwart the German invasion. Probably, this decision "is one of the main historical miscalculations of Stalin" an opportunity to defeat the most powerful European power and, having reached the coast of the Atlantic⁶³ who missed Ocean, eliminate the age-old Western threat to our country. As a result, the German leadership was able to begin on June 22, 1941, the implementation of the Barbarossa plan, and the Red Army, which was completing its concentration and deployment in the theater of operations, was taken by surprise and at the time of the German attack was not ready for any immediate action - neither defensive nor all the more offensive, which most negatively affected the course of hostilities in 1941. As a result, the Soviet Union had to wage war on its territory for 3 years, which led to colossal human and material losses.

At the same time, when analyzing the preparation of the Soviet Union for war with Germany, it should be remembered that we are examining an unfinished process. Therefore, the conclusions regarding the actual intentions of the Soviet leadership are largely conjectural. Moreover, the preparation of an attack is not identical to the attack itself. After all, as far as is known, despite the preparations for war with Germany, the Kremlin, until June 22, 1941, did not decide on the use of military force to defend its interests. Of course, further declassification and introduction into scientific circulation of the materials of the last months before the German attack will probably make it possible to more accurately reconstruct the planned actions of the Soviet leadership. However, it is quite possible that on some aspects of this problem it will never be possible to obtain an unambiguous answer.

In addition, attention should be paid to another side of this issue. No one has ever denied that the USSR was preparing for war with Germany. It is clear that the most advantageous for Moscow was a surprise attack on the enemy. It is quite obvious that blaming the Soviet leadership for preparing for

By such actions, V. Suvorov abstracts from the historical reality of 1941. However, if you do not turn a blind eye to it, then a completely reasonable question arises: why the Soviet Union should not have been preparing an attack on Germany? What, Germany was a great friend of the Soviet people? Or were Hitler and Stalin twin brothers? After all, at that moment it was Germany that was the most serious threat not only to the foreign policy interests of the Soviet Union, but also to the very existence of the Soviet state and its peoples.

Therefore, the Soviet leadership not only had the full right, but was also obliged to take all measures available to it that would allow it to defeat its enemy as efficiently as possible.

However, all these Soviet military preparations in fact have nothing to do with the question of "preventive war" on the part of Germany. The fact is that preventive war is "military actions taken to preempt the actions of the enemy, who is ready to attack or has already begun one, by his own offensive", which means that it is possible only if the side carrying them out knows about the intentions of the enemy. ⁶⁴,

Therefore, in order to prove his thesis, V. Suvorov should have turned to German documents and, on their basis, showed that Berlin was terribly afraid of a Soviet attack.

However, he avoids referring to German documents, since they show that in Berlin they perceived the USSR only as an abstract potential threat, and the preparation of the "Eastern Campaign" was not at all connected with the feeling of "immediate danger posed by the Red Army" ⁶⁵.

The German command knew about the transfer of additional forces to the western districts of the USSR, but regarded these actions as a defensive reaction to the discovered deployment of the Wehrmacht. The grouping of the Red Army was assessed as defensive, and no serious offensive actions were expected from the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941. ⁶⁶.

German documents and Hitler's statements unequivocally show that, when deciding to attack the USSR, Berlin was guided by its own strategic guidelines, and not by fear of an imminent Soviet attack, since the eastern neighbor was regarded only as a potential threat to Germany in the future. Rather, in this case, the German leadership sought to implement the basic law of German foreign policy formulated by Hitler in *Mein Kampf* :

"Never put up with the existence of two continental powers in Europe! In any attempt to create a second military power on the borders of Germany, or even only a state capable of subsequently becoming a major military power, you must see a direct attack on Germany. Once such a situation is created, you will not only have the right, you are obliged to fight against it by all means, including the use of weapons, and you have no right to rest until you succeed in preventing the emergence of such a state, or until you succeed in its

67 to destroy if it has already arisen"

The protracted war in the West, the gradual strengthening of the British economic blockade of Europe created a real threat of the economic collapse of Germany, so in Berlin it was decided to win such a "living space" so that Germany, "resistant to the blockade, territorially united and economically independent of

import of strategic raw materials, the continental European empire," would be able to withstand a long war with England and the USA⁶⁸.

The rooting of the idea of the "Eastern Campaign" in the German leadership was also facilitated by the fact that German intelligence had extremely scarce data on the Soviet armed forces and evaluated the Red Army based on the results of the battles of the Soviet-Finnish war. In the conditions of reassessment of the Wehrmacht's own forces, which had so quickly crushed the French army, a conclusion was drawn about the weakness of the Soviet armed forces. That is, in Berlin there was an opinion that the Soviet Union was not only a key link in the strategy of a future victory in the war with England, but also a rather weak enemy, the defeat of which would allow Germany to turn the tide of the war in its favor.

The funny thing is that on the issue of "preventive war" V. Suvorov refutes himself.

After quoting two versions of Hitler's August 4, 1941 statement that "if I had known that Russia was so heavily armed, it would have been much more difficult for me to decide on this campaign," he concludes that "Hitler knew nothing about the power Red Army"

⁶⁵.

As a result, the supporter of the thesis of Germany's "preventive war" against the USSR gets into a foolish position, trying to prove that Hitler decided to thwart the Soviet attack, about the preparation of which he actually knew nothing. Actually, this is where the dispute regarding the false version of Germany's "preventive war" against the Soviet Union can be considered over.

Thus, we see that the basic theses of V. Suvorov are an outright lie, borrowed from the arsenal of liberal-Western propaganda, the main task of which is to denigrate the history of the Soviet state.

It is clear that within the framework of such an approach, Moscow is denied the right not only to defend, but even just to have their own interests on the world stage.

First of all, this is due to the fact that the Soviet Union "was a unique, not envisaged by the West for other peoples, the prospect of independent progress and familiarization with the standards of development. The Western civilizational dichotomy: the West and the rest of the world, the West and barbarism, the West and the colonial periphery - was violated for the first time in history for the gigantic region of Eurasia"

⁷⁰.

It is quite obvious that the history of the Soviet state will continue to be an object of hatred on the part of liberal-Western propaganda and its Russian echoes, which are the "agents of influence" of the West in its traditional information and psychological war against Russia and are trying to block any unbiased attempts to comprehend the historical fate of our country. Motherland, its position in the world, as well as the possibilities of its preservation and development.

Applications

Documents and analytical development of German intelligence before the start of the Great Patriotic War in connection with the concentration of the Soviet Army near the German border immediately before June 22, 1941.

Appendix No. 1 dated June 11, 1941

Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht Keitel

SECRET MATTER OF THE SUPREME COMMAND OF THE WEhrmacht

**Wehrmacht High Command Berlin,
06/11/1941 No. 212/41 p. com. early**

CASE OF THE HEAD

Only through an officer!

**To the German Government
through Mr. Foreign Minister**

The High Command of the Wehrmacht constantly informed the German government of the extent to which the military tactics of Soviet Russia, on an increasing scale, assumed a threatening character. Although the political tactics of the Soviet Union were changing in nature, and the fulfillment of agreements in the economic field did not give rise to any grounds for appeal, it has now become clear that the military measures of the Soviet Union are definitely aimed at preparing an attack on Germany.

This state of affairs, which leads to the grandiose concentration of the Red Army from the Black Sea to the Baltic, is revealed in the following:

By the beginning of 1940, there were still no fears about the inviolability of the German eastern border. During the liquidation of Poland, the Soviet Union showed an allegedly friendly attitude. However, already at the beginning of 1940, it was striking that the Soviet Union began to strongly strengthen not only its western border, that it not only formed a well-known dead zone along the border and began to move industry inland, but also undertook an ever-increasing strengthening of border troops .

01.09. 1939 in the area to the west of the line Arkhangelsk-Kalinin-Poltava-Western tip of the Crimea stood:

**44 rifle divisions, 20
cavalry divisions and 3
motorized and tank brigades.**

Due to the Polish campaign, the Soviet Union until 28.11. 1939 reinforced these military

parts of the 47th divisions and motorized and tank brigades until the next numbers:

**76 rifle divisions, 21
cavalry divisions, 17
motorized and tank brigades.**

Despite the end of the Polish campaign, the reinforcement continued on a larger scale. So until 12.03.[19]40, at least 16 more, however, more precisely, 25 divisions and motorized brigades were added. The total number of Soviet forces in the western border zone therefore reached the following levels in mid- March 1940 :

**86-95 infantry divisions,
22 cavalry divisions,
22 motorized divisions and a tank. brigades.**

After, at the beginning, the joint work of German and Soviet institutions on the border of the former Poland proceeded, apparently, successfully and smoothly, in the winter of 1939/[19]40. serious incidents have become more frequent (Annex 1).

These incidents revealed a certain hostility and hostility towards the Germans on the part of the Soviet border troops. This behavior of theirs was completely unreasonable, since the German side clearly showed peaceful intentions and made efforts to create a peaceful coexistence on the border strip. Whereas German border violations were always minor, Soviet border violations were much more numerous, incomparably more severe, and often resulted in deaths on German territory. Only after serious submissions from the German government did Soviet violations of the border, at least temporarily, decrease.

When the Baltic states were occupied by Soviet Russia, the total maximum number of occupying forces was agreed upon by treaties at 70,000 people. Initially, this number was not even reached. So on 01.28.[19-39] the size of the occupying army was 53,000, and on 02.01.1940 - 57,500 people. The occupation was carried out without resistance. And in the subsequent period of occupation, there never arose a situation that could justify from a military point of view for increasing the number of Soviet occupation troops. Despite this, the Soviet Union, after

completely annexed these three countries, began to occupy their territories extremely strong military units of all kinds of weapons. At the beginning of the summer of 1940, the occupying forces reached a total of approximately 250,000 men. Currently, there are supposedly 650,000 people on the territory of the former Baltic.

A further serious threat to Germany was the accumulation of significant Russian forces on the Russo-Romanian border, which began in October 1940. When in September 1940 the subsequently carried out intention to send a German military mission to Romania, in accordance with the desire of the then Romanian government, was discussed, the government of the USSR took advantage of this circumstance as a pretext to gather significant ground and air forces on the Romanian border in Bessarabia and Bukovina and station them there. The task of these forces was first

put pressure on the Balkan states, thereby reduce German influence in the Balkans and prevent the peaceful implementation of German intentions in the Balkans. After the performance of the British forces in Greece became more and more strong, the task of the Russian forces gathered on the Romanian border was, obviously, to take part in the inevitable armed conflict that became after the revolution in Belgrade on March 27, 1941, the rapid onslaught to the west, link up with the Yugoslav troops and cut off the German forces in the Balkans from their rear lines. The prerequisites for offensive operations were created: airfields were equipped near the border, supply bases were set up, tank units were brought up, rear communications were improved, and numerous preparations were made in the mountains for an attack on the border. It was only thanks to the rapid and decisive successes of German weapons that these plans were thwarted.

Throughout 1940 and 1941, the constant violations of the borders of German sovereignty by the Soviet air forces stretched like a red thread. In May 1941 alone, Soviet planes flew over the German border 27 times. Also, violations of the border by Soviet soldiers have again become more frequent since the beginning of 1941 and take unbearable forms.

A vivid picture of the extreme concentration of Soviet troops on the western border is given by the following summary of dates from the appendix :

09/01/39:

***44 rifle divisions, 20
cavalry divisions, 3
motorized and tank brigades (about 65
divisions in total)***¹

11/28/39:

***76 rifle divisions, 21
cavalry divisions, 17
motorized and tank brigades (about 106
divisions in total)***

05/01/41:

***118 rifle divisions, 20
cavalry divisions, 40
motorized and tank brigades (about 158
divisions in total).***

In view of this increase in the forces of the Red Army, the High Command of the Wehrmacht was forced to gradually transfer significant forces to the German eastern border. This regrouping was solely due to the threatening Soviet advance of forces.

The threat posed to Germany by the mobilization of the Soviet army is also matched by the hostile spirit nurtured in her, which is kindled and constantly supported by hostile propaganda. There are countless reports of this also from friendly and neutral observers.

From paragraph VI of Appendix 2 it follows that the mobilization of the Red Army in general terms can be considered completed. For out of the total:

***170 combat divisions,
33 S cavalry divisions, 46
motorized and tank brigades;***

in the western border strip are:

***118 rifle divisions, 20
cavalry divisions, 40
motorized and tank brigades;***

in the rest of European Russia only:

***27 rifle divisions,
5 S cavalry divisions, 1
motorized and tank brigade;***

in the Far East only:

***25 rifle divisions, 8
cavalry divisions, 5
motorized and tank brigades.***

Thus, the picture is that the Russian mobilization was pushed ever closer to the border. Separate parts of the military forces and aviation deployed their fronts located near the border, and airfields are occupied by strong detachments of aviation forces. Intelligence activities were noticeably intensified and were partly carried out by senior officers with large staffs.

All these facts, in connection with the desire developed in the Russian army for the destruction of Germany, lead to the conclusion that the Soviet Union is preparing, at any moment that seems appropriate to it, to go over to the offensive against Germany.

Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht Keitel

Appendix No. 2 of June 20, 1941

High Command of the Wehrmacht

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Or) Berlin,

06/20/1941 No. 001161/41 p. com.

Concerning: Soviet border violations.

Secret command business.

**To the German Foreign Office Personally to
Ambassador Ritter**

On June 17, 1941, at 8:25 am, armed Russian soldiers crossed the Russian border within the German VI Army Corps east of the Rominten wasteland near Ezherizhka (15 km west of Kalvaria) and, reconnaissance, passed through German territory. When the German sentries opened fire on the Russian soldiers, the latter took cover. After a short skirmish, the Russians withdrew back to its territory.

This incident, in connection with a particularly massive concentration of Soviet forces against East Prussia, is a new symptom of the provocative intentions of Soviet Russia.

Since June 11 of this year, in the Suwalki - Memel border region alone, we have clearly established: 20 infantry divisions, 2 tank divisions and 5 tank brigades.

19 infantry divisions, 7 cavalry divisions, 1 tank division and 5 tank brigades are drawn up in an arc far to the west around Bialystok.

In the rear near Baranovichi, a reserve army of 10 infantry divisions and 2 tank brigades is concentrated.

It follows from this that the huge Soviet military forces, divided into 4 armies, cover:

49 infantry divisions, between which there are a large number motorized, 3 tank divisions, 12 tank brigades and 7 cavalry divisions,

which at any moment can be brought on the offensive from the east and southeast against East Prussia and against the area at the mouths of the Bug and Narew north of Warsaw.

Such an attack could, according to reports of a concentration on Soviet airfields north of the Pripyat Marshes, be supported by almost 2,000 aircraft.

The fact that Soviet forces are concentrated on the rest of the Eastern Front

in a similar, though less pronounced manner, was communicated in detail to the German Foreign Office as early as 11 May. In recent weeks, the picture of the position of the concentration of Soviet troops has changed only so much that exclusively fast forces (tank divisions and brigades, as well as motorized ones) and cavaliers are concentrated in southern Bessarabia. divisions, which directly gives rise to the conclusion about offensive intentions.

In conclusion, the High Command of the Wehrmacht must note that such a state of war in relation to a state with which a friendly treaty has been concluded is unique.

There can be no doubt that Soviet Russia has been looking at this treaty for months now as a fence behind which she could safely carry out in the interests of England the greatest concentration of military forces in her history against Germany.

The security of the German state requires the immediate elimination of this menacing danger.

*Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht
on behalf of:
signed:
Jodl*